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TO THE
LANDOWNERS and TRADERS
OF THE
Counties of WORCESTER and GLOUCESTER.

THE Carriage of Goods and Merchandize is an Object of such Importance in a commercial State, that a Lover of his Country will join in promoting every Attempt to render the same as cheap, certain, and expeditious as possible. While much has been done in the Northern Parts of this Kingdom, in improving River Navigations, the Rivers running Westward unhappily have been so little attended to, that they have not received any Improvement. Exclusive of natural Obstructions in the River *Severn*, the present expensive and uncertain Method of towing Barges and Vessels by Men, calls loudly for a Change; and every one acquainted with Trade, and the Advantages of Population, will rejoice in the Occasion of calling back to the Community, and better Uses, a large Number of able Men, who are literally debased to the Level of Beasts of Burthen.

In our national Difficulties, it has been some Consolation to the speculative Part of this Kingdom, that our Manufactures and Commerce may be aided and increased by Improvements; and no Improvements can more facilitate the extensive Branch of the Iron Trade than Navigation. Some of the largest Foundries in *Europe*, and the greatest Manufactories of Hardwares in the World, have seated themselves upon the Banks and navigable Branches leading into the River *Severn*. The ponderous Substance of these Wares requires a regular improved Navigation to convey them to Market; the Want of it gives the Foundries and Manufactories of the North (where the Rivers are improved) Advantages over our own in this Part of the Kingdom. Let us improve the Navigation of the *Severn*, and we shall convey our Produce to Market upon equal Terms with our Neighbours; give a regular, certain, and cheap Circulation to Trade; and be of real national Utility. The Views of those who are promoting the Improvements of the River *Severn* are fixed upon a liberal and certain Plan; not to impose, as hath been maliciously hinted;—they wish not to oppress, but to secure the Property of every Man; and in the Progress of their Works to accommodate every Gentleman, as far as Prudence can go, without losing Sight of the grand Object. Under these Rules of Justice, it is wished to offer a Bill to Parliament, trusting it will have the Assistance of the provident and landed Man, as every Improvement tends to his Interest and Welfare that essentially serves his Country.—In the present State of the River *Severn*, when there is not a Scarcity of Water, the usual Allowance for towing Vessels is One Man to every Three Tons, from *Worcester* to *Stourport*; Half the Number of Men from *Upton* to *Worcester*; and in the lower Parts of the River still a less Number. The Wages of these Men, including their Provision, amounts to Three Shillings and Four Pence *per* Day, each Man; One able Horse will do the Work of Six Men; the Wages of Six Men amount to Twenty Shillings *per* Day: Thus it evidently appears, allowing Four Shillings *per* Day for a Horse and a Boy to drive him, that the present Expence of Towing will be greatly decreased, and become an Object worthy of universal Attention.

The Public, by Means of this Improvement, will have a regular Supply of Coals at all Seasons; their Scarcity, occasioned by Drought, can be no more: The Price will become as regular as the Supply; by which Means those Impediments which now make a Scarcity,

Scarcity, and at Times raise the Price of Coals, will be entirely removed. The Author of a late Pamphlet forgets himself upon the Idea of Monopoly. When *Shropshire* alone supplied *Severn* with Coal, there was no Objection started; and how he can conceive a Monopoly to arise, when the Mines of Two more Counties are brought into *Severn*, by the Means of the present Canals, and that in a regular and constant Supply, is too chimerical to obtain Credit. What causes Monopolies is Scarcity, artificial or real, which the Want of regular Supplies creates.

When the Trade of the *Severn* becomes regular, by means of these Improvements, of course the Passage of Goods and Land Produce upon it become so also. The present Delays and Hindrances are so heavily felt by all who trust Property upon that River, as to implore Improvement, to prevent the constant Damage sustained by Pilfering, Waste, Perishing, and various Water-damage, by Merchandize being detained upon that River, for want of Water to convey it along. Improve the River, and you cure the Evil. Boat Owners will have their Vessels in constant Employ; a Saving in the Expence of the Haling Part, will be Eighteen Shillings in Thirty-six, as appears by a late Calculation of the Barge Owners themselves; but a greater Benefit to Barge Owners arises by being enabled to make Two or Three Voyages with full Lading, in the Time they now make One; these Emoluments to the Barge Owners will in Part drop into the Pocket of the Public, by lowering the Freight of Merchandize in proportion to the lowering the Expences of working a Barge, saving Time, &c.

When the River is improved, there can be no Reason to suppose it will not do Business as low as a Canal, at a Halfpenny a Ton per Mile; but the Conveyance of Coal upon Canals is 1s. 2d. for 31 Miles, and 1s. 9d. upon the River for 12 Miles in its unimproved State—such is the Difference between a regular Employ and an uncertain one: But a further Advantage will still arise to a River Vessel, by being enabled to carry double the Lading of a Canal Boat, at the same Expence.

Let us now consider the Objections against the *Tonnage*, *Haling Path*, and *Land-damage*.

The Tonnage upon Coals is laid so low as One Penny a Ton, to pass the Distance of Forty Miles; a Rate so low, that unless a Man means to cavil, he cannot wish it reduced to benefit by its Expenditure.

The Tonnage upon Merchandize is fixed, between			Upon the heavy enumerated		
<i>Gloucester</i> and <i>Tewksbury</i> ,	—	at 2d. a Ton.	} Articles	—	1d. a Ton.
Between <i>Tewksbury</i> and <i>Upton</i>	—	2d. a Ton.		—	1½d. a Ton.
Between <i>Worcester</i> and <i>Stourport</i>	—	2d. a Ton.		—	1½d. a Ton.

The full Distances are — — 6d. a Ton. 4d. a Ton.

By these Means all intermediate Distances are relieved; and the Trade of *Tewksbury* may be effectually guarded against any Imposition, which they might fear to suffer, on account of their local Situation with the River *Avon*.

These Tonnages are expected to produce sufficient to pay Interest for an Expenditure of about £. 12,000 for the River Improvements, and a large Annual Sum to keep it in Repair. In laying this Tonnage, every Object hath been attended to, which it could be conceived would oppress any one: The Boat is free, the Lading only is charged, and that at so low a Rate, as to be less than the common Charge of Wharfage and Housing at any Port in the Kingdom.

The Land Owners have been alarmed at the Word *Wears*, supposing them *Wares* *Stanks* or *Obstructions* in the River to raise the Water, and thereby injure the adjoining Land; but they have mistaken the Meaning of the Term: The Word "*Ware*," or "*Weir*," is a Dam or Stank to pound up Water; but the Word "*Wear*" is a Term of Art, meaning to scour or deepen a Shallow, by forming a Channel through it: And it is owing to this absurd Jargon, of Two Words nearly alike in Sound, but different in their Meaning, that much Misapprehension has been conceived. It is the Undertakers Care and Concern not to injure the Landed Property—it being secured by a Re-compence easily recovered.

The Idea of improving the River *Severn* by Locks, being now laid aside, and the other adopted of doing it by these *Wears*, all the Shallows will be scoped out, which

which now obstruct the Navigation of Vessels, and the Pounds of Water at present occasioned by them will of course be lowered instead of raised. The Undertakers may be bound by a Clause not to raise the Surface of the Water by their Works, and to leave open every Drain, Ditch, or Sough, which empties itself into the *Severn*.

The Bed of the River thus improved, how can Floods be raised by such Works? Is opening and enlarging a Channel of Conveyance, an Obstruction?

The Towing Path, if raised at all, will be only where open Drains, Ditches, and Rivulets fall into the River, over which Places Bridges will be built, under the Direction of Commissioners; these Bridges, with a small Alteration in the Stiles, or putting up double Gates, optionable to the Land Owner, are all the Alterations which will take place. Watering Places will not be altered; but if any should be incommoded, others will be provided at the Undertakers Expence.

It is a Fact, where Towing Paths by Horses have come into Use, less Trespass and Damage are done to the Land than where Men tow Barges. The *Thames* and *Trent*, now improving, are Instances of it; and Experience proves, that the common Apprehensions raised against Improvements of this Kind, have not been realized. Indeed it is natural to suppose, that where common Roads pass through unfenced Corn Fields, a Trespass would be incurred; but it is found otherwise. The pasturing of Horses in Lands through which the Towing Path passes is made penal; the Horse becomes forfeited to the Man he trespasses upon. The Act of Parliament will give Penalties upon the Owner of every Barge, for each Horse which passes without a Muzzle, or without the Owner's Name on his Collar, or leaves a Gate open after he shall have passed through it; and makes him subject to heavy Penalties for doing Mischiefs, recovered by so easy a Process as carrying the Offender before a Justice of the Peace. In the common Mode of towing by Men, certainly more Land must be soiled by 12 or 20 Men haling in different Tracks, than by Two Horses in one; and this Path is proposed to be paid for, although a common Road now in most Places.

There are Two Sorts of Men employed upon the River; Watermen, who are the Navigators of Barges, and live on the Water; and Haling Men, who meet with Employ as Occasion requires, and are totally unacquainted with the Art of navigating Boats, and only officiate in the servile Employment of Horses: These latter are Labourers and Mechanics of every Sort, who, from Novelty or Frolic, or enticed by good Wages Meat and Drink, like Men to Harvest Work, will leave their common Employment for this of haling Barges; but for a Season only, not depending upon it for a continual Subsistence. But, as these Improvements tend to increase and extend Intercourse, they must also tend to the Employment of more Barges and Watermen, and of Course make the *Severn* a still greater Nursery for Watermen, who are of great national Use. Far is it from the Undertakers Intentions to injure this Set of useful and respectable Men, or make Impositions upon them or their Employ, to their own Injury; in this present Case they have been imposed upon, and had their Minds inflamed by the Views of Men, who, instead of seeking their Good, are promoting Canals to run parallel with the River, much to their Injury, and of no Service to the Public. Why so great a Change in their Way of thinking? What they warmly approved and wished for a few Years ago, they now appear to oppose.

The great Object of removing the Impediments in the River *Severn*, is to give an uninterrupted, regular, and expeditious Communication with the grand Chain of Inland Canals, which are connecting *London* with all Out-Ports and Manufactories in the Island, and also connecting the East and West Sea: The *Severn* is a Link in the Chain unimproved, and of material Consequence whether finished or not; but certainly the Landed Interest of the County of *Worcester* will not shut a Door against the Riches and Labours of the Kingdom passing through their County in Safety! we say Safety; because freed from the Stoppages, Risques, Damages, and Depredations of a Sea Conveyance.

The present Channels of the River, upon the Shallows, which Barges pass through, are crooked, and meander very much; but by what Rule any Person can make these Channels, which have shallow Water upon them, less dangerous than straight Channels with deep Water in them, is a Mystery yet to be learnt.

By what Rule can it be made out, that reducing the Expences of working a Barge, and keeping her in continual Employ, will be the Means of advancing the Freight?

Is

Is not the real Cause of the River being unimproved below *Stourport*, the Reason of Delay in not improving it above *Stourport*? or is it owing to the Act for improving it being put upon a wrong Plan?

The Freshes upon the River are as uncertain as rainy Seasons; and pass away as suddenly as they rise, scarcely to be depended upon for a Voyage. It is to keep the River in a continued State of doing Business, when these Freshes fail, that these Improvements of the Shallows are undertaken. As far as the Navigation of the River is perfected, so far Barges have an uninterrupted Advantage; where it remains unimproved, they must use the same Means they and Canals now do, that is, make use of small Boats until they come into deep Water and the improved Part of the River, and there shift their Lading into larger Boats or Barges.

If the Land Owners of *Worcestershire* had wished to have become the Undertakers, they were informed, at the County Meeting at *Worcester*, that the Business would be given up to them. The Object and Wishes of the present Promoters of this Scheme are only to have the Improvements carried into Execution upon a certain and liberal Plan; and it is presumed they will readily agree not to take Tonnage upon any of the Districts until they are severally complete; and whether they are done by *Staffordshire*, *Shropshire*, or *Worcestershire* Subscriptions, is immaterial.—When Good is done, the Motive, or by whom, does not concern the Public.

A Tax is an hideous Monster; but the Toll of One Penny a Ton upon Coal, in this Case, cannot be called one; for suppose the Consumption of a private House to amount to Six Tons Yearly, the Levy is only Six Pence, and the Saving in the Freight of these Six Tons will be to the Consumer near Six Shillings.

A FREEHOLDER.

J. P. Dow and L. L. L. L.

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1785.

